

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Cesar Chavez, Union Organizer



True wealth is not measured in money or status or power. It is measured in the legacy we leave behind for those we love and those we inspire.

Cesar Chavez spent his entire life working on farms. He was born in Arizona in 1927. When he was five years old his family moved to his grandfather's farm. Cesar loved living on the farm with his family. Unfortunately, the family lost the family farm in 1937. They were forced to move.

Like many other farmers who lost their farms in the 1930s, the Chavez family headed to California and became migrant farm workers. Large farms would hire workers to pick crops. The farm would provide camps for the workers to live at while they were working on the farm. The shelters were either shacks or tents.

Being a migrant worker was difficult and dangerous. The days were long and hard, and the pay was low. Farm equipment accidents often occurred that led to injury or even death. The workers were also exposed to dangerous chemicals that were used to kill bugs. Cesar Chavez would remember all of this.

In 1952 Cesar Chavez joined the Community Service Organization. This organization helped poor people register to vote, get health care, and fight racial discrimination. Eventually, Chavez became the national director for the organization.

Chavez wanted the Community Service Organization to help the farmers in California. He wanted to create a labor union for the farmers. The

union would help support farmers by making sure working conditions were safe. The union also wanted to help the workers get better pay. When the organization said that they did not want to help the farmers, Chavez left the group and started the National Farm Workers Association in 1962.

In 1965 members of the National Farm Workers Association went on strike against grape farmers. They wanted better work conditions and more pay. The farm workers shared their stories and asked Americans to boycott California grapes until the strike was settled. A boycott is when a group of people refuse to buy or use a service until a policy is changed. The strike and boycott lasted for five years. But finally the grape farmers agreed to a new contract.

For the rest of his life, Chavez continued to work for farm workers. He educated the public about dangerous pesticides that were used on food. He organized boycotts and marches.

Cesar Chavez died in 1993. After his death he was awarded the Presidential Award of Freedom.

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1. What conclusion can you make about migrant farm work from the statements below?

- ☐ The shelters were either shacks or tents.
- ☐ The days were long and hard, and the pay was low.
- ☐ Farm equipment accidents often occurred that led to injury or even death.
- ☐ The workers were also exposed to dangerous chemicals that were used to kill bugs

2. A legacy is a gift that is passed on to others. What legacy did Cesar Chavez leave?

3. What information from the passage helped you infer that Cesar Chavez supported change through nonviolent means??

4. Read the quote below. Do you agree or disagree with this quote. Support your opinion with details.

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